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DD/S&T-3626-68

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

SUBJECT: Request for Comments on Revised  
Fitness Report System

REFERENCE: D/Pers Memo, dtd 27 Aug 1968, same subj

1. I see no significant result accruing from the reduction of the present five-point adjectival scale of the fitness report to three. Indeed, one might ask why not reduce it to two. I would anticipate that a three-point scale would simply result in the addition of pluses and minuses and, therefore, to a proliferation of categories beyond the five which now are used.

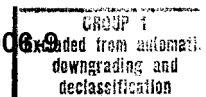
2. We have spent much time in recent months discussing many aspects of Agency personnel management. Judging by these discussions a key problem is how to keep raising the caliber of the Agency's personnel assets. Raising the caliber means weeding out those individuals who are not performing at a proficient level or placing them in positions where they will perform proficiently. I do not think that the format of the fitness report is the correct focal point for an attack against this problem. Indeed, I find no fault with the format itself. I would agree that the system of fitness reports is a part of the overall personnel management process. I find that shortcomings in the fitness report system stem from the process of rating rather than the format of the report. Simply speaking, there are two aspects of making out a fitness report which inhibit the process:

a. the time involved to fill out the fitness report and

b. the discomfort of the confrontation, particularly in those cases in which the rating should indicate less than total satisfaction.

With regard to (a) I would hesitate to lengthen the time of preparation by combining the adjective rating of each duty

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with a narrative. On (b), the natural tendency of the rater is to frame his report in a manner which glosses over or simply omits embarrassingly critical evaluations. It is comparatively easy to inform an analyst that he must improve his writing ability. It is not so easy for the rater to inform him that he appears incapable of ever developing such ability. Too often, therefore, those being rated are unaware of the extent of existing dissatisfaction.

3. I would suggest, therefore, that we need a technique which combines to facilitate the expression of dissatisfaction with corrective action. An example might be the tying of required action to use of the "adequate" category. To my thinking an employee performing at the "adequate" level should be easily replaceable with resulting improvement. I would favor the idea that a rating of "adequate" mean the start of a probationary year in which improvement is necessary if the individual is to continue in that job. Then if the "adequate" rating is repeated at the end of the next reporting period one of two alternative actions would follow:

a. the individual would be shifted to another position, presumably more in line with his talents and thereby resulting in a subsequently higher rating or

b. if the individual did not wish to shift, it would be understood that he could remain but with a reduction in grade.

I would not argue the semantics of using "adequate" for this action category, but I do feel that some such category be used which is higher on the scale than "weak" and yet indicates that the organization does not intend to continue the individual indefinitely on such a marginal basis at his present pay scale.

4. The value of such a scheme lies in the automaticity of eventual action on the specific problem combined with the postponement of action pending mutual efforts of both the rated individual and his supervisor to effect an improvement.


5. Briefly, I do not think it possible to come up with a perfect system for evaluating performance. Some improvement may be possible in coming closer to satisfying the

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Agency's needs. In balance, however, I feel that a fitness report system is only one small part of the overall substance of success in management and/or administration.

FOIAb3b

  
Carl E. Duckett  
Deputy Director  
for  
Science and Technology

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Date Rec'd

27 SEP 1968

ROUTING

INITIALS

DATE

2 AD/Pers

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1 AEO/Pers

*[Handwritten initials]* 27 SEP 1968

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*Agree - I have [redacted] and draft  
asked [redacted] to prepare a position*

NOTES I can't help but agree with a lot  
the DDS&T says. It's not the format but  
rather the way it is used. I agree with  
leaving the five basic categories alone.  
Satisfactory means Proficient to me - A  
lot of us would miss Strong. Suggest  
we send a copy to [redacted] and  
ask them to review and to try and get  
the whole package together with a summary  
of comments by the time Mr W returns. RDK

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